

~~Top Secret~~

[REDACTED]

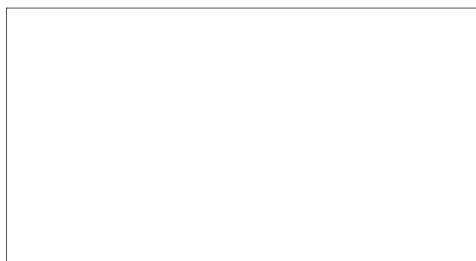


Intelligence Memorandum

RECEIVED, NSC
JUN 11 8 27 AM '73

Soviet Military Assistance to North Vietnam

MORI PER C03318876



~~Top Secret~~

4

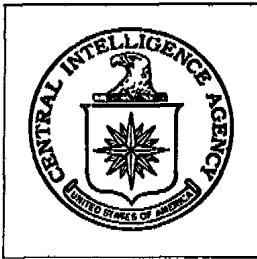
June 1973

[REDACTED]

25X1

25X1

Page Denied



June 1973

Soviet Military Assistance to
North Vietnam

Summary

Since the cease-fire, the USSR has continued to send military supplies to North Vietnam, but the amounts are probably well below those of the peak war years. As long as the USSR continues to assign the highest priority to rapprochement with Washington, the Soviets can probably be expected to exercise restraint in their arms deliveries to the North Vietnamese and to discourage the North Vietnamese from launching a major military action.

Page Denied

Another argument for the thesis that military deliveries are continuing comes from the activities of the North Vietnamese themselves.

--Since the cease-fire, North Vietnam has dispatched large amounts of arms and ammunition to South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. In the past, such efforts were not undertaken unless Hanoi were ensured of replacement stocks from its Communist allies.

It can be argued, however, that past practices and reasoning do not apply in the current situation.

--Hanoi could have opted for a quick and heavy infusion of supplies into the combat zones before the cease-fire became effective, in part to counter the heavy infusion of US military supplies to South Vietnam. If Hanoi were not contemplating an early return to major military action, the need to be assured of having replacement stocks already in hand would not be controlling. They could be built up over time.

As might have been expected, treatment of the aid issue in Soviet propaganda since the signing of the peace agreement suggests some de-emphasis of the military aspect.

--Soviet media have not referred explicitly to current or future military aid to North Vietnam, but have instead strongly implied that future Soviet assistance would be primarily economic.

--North Vietnamese pronouncements have contained a number of hints that Hanoi is not pleased with the aid the Soviets are providing.

Our judgment is that total military aid to North Vietnam in 1972 may have reached a value of one-half billion dollars, the largest such commitment since 1967. Of this, the USSR probably provided about two thirds. The aid continued right up to the cease-fire.

With the cessation of US bombing over North Vietnam, Hanoi's requirement for large amounts of expensive SAM and AAA equipment and ordnance has been greatly reduced. The slackening of the fighting elsewhere in Indochina has cut Hanoi's needs for materiel to the lowest level of the past decade.

Prior to the cease-fire, the North Vietnamese probably had enough materiel to pursue a range of military options--up to and including a major offensive. The Soviets, therefore, cannot prevent an offensive should the Vietnamese decide it is in their interests. Hanoi would probably be reluctant to launch a major military action without the support of its great-power allies and without guarantees that the materiel expended would be replaced. This attitude gives the USSR some degree of leverage, though the effectiveness of this leverage is limited as we have seen in the past.

The Soviet attitude toward future military aid deliveries will, in large measure, be determined by the extent of their desire to get on with the policies of detente with the West and rapprochement with the US. They recognize that renewed heavy fighting in Indochina could jeopardize at least this latter policy and they will probably work to keep the Indochinese problem relegated to the back burner. Since

China has demonstrated that it too attaches more importance to relations with Washington than to North Vietnamese victories in Indochina, the Soviets probably believe they can exercise some restraint in their arms deliveries to the Vietnamese, even if there were a resurgence of major military action, and still maintain their position in Hanoi. In addition, they may have some hope that by exercising restraint in Indochina, they can extract concessions from the US on issues of more direct and immediate consequences to the USSR (e.g., trade legislation, economic credits, CSCE).

In sum, it seems likely that the Soviet Union is continuing to send military supplies to North Vietnam, but the amounts probably are well below those of the peak war years.